

MEMORIAL

OR

DECORATION DAY

A POEM

Lewis

Founded on Facts.

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A POEM

FOUNDED ON FACTS.

PRESENTED WITH COMPLIMENTS.

To

By

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of Parkersburg
W. Va

 PREFATORY. 

The tale is an original one, founded on an incident of actual occurrence—a simple touching story, portraying good and charitable impulses acted out under circumstances where bitter prejudices and strong feelings would naturally tend to stifle them.

It is no apology for the Rebellion, nor any palliation of its enormities. The lesson it teaches is that bitter animosities however well founded ought, so far as they relate to individuals, to terminate at the grave.



“When cold in the grave lies the friend thou hast loved,
Be his faults and his follies forgot by thee then,

But if from their slumber the vail be removed,
Weep o'er them in silence and close it again.”



A POEM.

T WAS balmy morning in the month of May,
The golden sun-light gleamed o'er hill and dale
And kissed the sparkling dew-drops as they lay
Profusely sprinkled on the flowery vale—
Till one by one they hid their glittering eyes—
Bade earth adieu, and vanished to the skies,
Thus dawned the morning in the month of May,
Thus nature welcomed "Decoration Day."



G RIM war had ceased, its ghastly wounds were healed,
Its banners furled—and mighty armies fled,
But here and there its relics were revealed
In shattered walls and cities of the dead;
And mourning ones that wandered to and fro
In vestments dark and countenance of woe;
These were the records Time had not effaced
That ruthless war in fire and blood had traced.

Near yonder hill where grave-stones thickly stand
Amid the grove that shields them from the eye
Where runs the silvery brooklet o'er the sand
With ceaseless murmur as it passes by—
Where earliest flowerets greet the coming Spring
And parting day-light last is lingering
Rest Patriot martyrs neath the hallowed sod
Who gave their lives to Liberty and God.

THITHER the sad procession wends its way,
Widows and orphans mingling in the train
While tattered banners, battle-scared betray
How brothers hate when war's fierce passions reign.
Oh may such hatred never more return
But in its stead may Love's pure incense burn
May sweet Forgiveness like the flowers ye bring
Yield perfume to the heart, and cause perennial Spring

Though vast this City of the fallen brave
The living Friends with pious care bestow
A floral offering upon every grave
Moist with affections tears as if to show
The risen Spirits fondly lingering near
How cherished yet, their memory—and how dear
The sacred spot where rests the earthly form
Securely now from battle's raging storm.

EACH grave was decked with wreaths of buds and flowers,
The fittest tribute to the honored dead—
To those who battled for these homes of ours
And precious blood on Freedom's altar shed.
One mound there was remote from all the rest
No pathway toward it, by no hand carressed
None cared for this—and none a tribute gave,
All turned away—for 'twas a "Rebel's Grave."

Amid the throng a little girl was seen
Wending her footsteps towards the lonely mound
The grass upon it, was as fresh and green
As that which grew on consecrated ground
"Tis true" she said "that others seem to scorn
This one lone grave so friendless and forlorn
But I will go and strew with little flowers
What God baptised with sunshine and with showers.

THE tender tribute which pure childhood gave
Called forth rebuke from some who stood anear
“Why scatter roses on a Rebel’s Grave
Twas not for this, that we assembled here.”
The girl looked up in innocent surprise
Through tear-drops gathering in her hazel eyes
At length in faltering accents she replied
To those who would her noble motives chide:

“My own dear Father was a soldier too,
Far in the Sunny South he marched away
With friends and comrades dressed in Union Blue
To meet the Rebel enemy in Gray.
He kissed his darling—told me not to cry,
“When will you come,” I said, he answered “by and by”
But O he’ll never Come! for he was slain
And now lies buried on the battle plain.



PERHAPS some little southern girl will go
And deck poor Papa's grave with Sunny flowers
And oh! how happy I would be to know
That it was cared for as we care for ours
And if she should—I could not love the one
Who blamed her for so kind an action done,
Hard is the heart and cruel, that denies
A single flower where buried Papa lies."

"And who can tell but in that distant land
Some little orphan girl like me, has cried
Because no Father takes her by the hand
And now she knows not when nor where he died
It may be true, that in this very spot,
Neglected here avoided and forgot
The father of my unknown sister lies
For whom she nightly prays, and grieves, and cries.

W HILE gazing here I heard an Angel say
 "On yon lone mound, thy prettiest roses strew,
Then on thy Father's Grave—so far away
 I'll cause some hand to do the same for you."
 "Sweet Angel voice—I hastened to obey
My heart was happy and I could not stay—
Dear Orphan friend whom God to me has given
 I'll love and clasp her when we meet in Heaven."

The simple story of the orphan child
 Moved many hearts to tenderness and tears
The Angel-impulse they at first reviled
 All see anew—and every heart reveres.
These holy accents uttered by the tongue
 Of one so stricken—beautiful and young
Seemed a new law of Charity and Love,
 Revealed all pure from brighter realms above.

SUCCESSING seasons came and passed away—

The annual offerings to the dead were made;
At each return of Decoration Day

Bright wreaths of flowers on *every* grave were laid,
And none more fragrant beautiful and fair

Than on the lonely mound were scattered there
In tender mem'ry of the Orphan Child

Whose spirit gazed from Paradise and smiled.



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